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ABSTRACT

For the sixth consecutive year, the New Brunswick Department of Education, New Brunswick Teachers' Association, and University of New Brunswick organized the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) in 12 Anglophone school districts. Beginning teachers were paired with experienced teachers who mentored them throughout the year. This report presents data from surveys of beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district coordinators. Over half of the beginning teachers were recent university graduates. Nine district coordinators took on the job of recruiting competent mentors. Workshops for beginning teachers and mentors were organized in every district. Participation rates in low-risk activities (e.g., lesson planning and sharing resources) were similar to previous years (generally 93 to 99 percent). Participation rates in higher-risk activities (e.g., classroom observations and providing feedback) were slightly lower than in the year 2000, which were slightly lower than they were in 1999. All four participant groups strongly recommended continuing the BTIP. Mentors believed the Program benefited them professionally and personally. The report notes subtle signs of erosion in participants' levels of program satisfaction. Recommendations include: increased funding for the BTIP, careful scrutiny of which new teachers are invited to participate in the BTIP, and regular meetings between district coordinators and principals. (Contains 11 references.) (SM)

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Mentoring New Teachers: A Report on the 2001 Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

by

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October 2001

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This report is dedicated to Thomas Hanley whose vision and determination were instrumental in establishing the BTIP in the province of New Brunswick

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary ii

Structure and Funding 1

Introduction to the Study 2

The Database 2
Defining Beginning Teachers 5
Mentor Recruitment 6

Professional Activities Supporting the BTIP 6

District Workshops 7
Local School Level Activities 8

Participants' Perspectives on the Program: Strengths and Weaknesses 13

Beginning Teachers' Perspectives 14
Benefits to Beginning Teachers 15
Suggestions for Improvement 16
Unsuccessful Partnerships 18
Persistent Problems 21

Mentors' Perspectives 22
Benefits to Mentors 23
Persistent Problems for Mentors 27

Principals' Perspectives 28
Program Strengths 30
Suggestions for Improvement 31

District Coordinators' Perspectives 32
Problems Encountered 34
Positive Features 35

Conclusions 36

Recommendations 40

References 41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the sixth consecutive year, the Department of Education, in cooperation with the New Brunswick Teachers' Association, and the University of New Brunswick, organized the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) in all 12 anglophone school districts of the province. Three hundred beginning teachers in 134 schools were paired with experienced teachers who acted as their mentors for the school year. The number of beginning teachers represents a 13 % increase from the previous year, and a 92 % increase since the Program began in 1995. The number of district coordinators declined this year to nine from eleven in the 2000 survey. The database for this report consists of survey responses from four groups of participants (% returns in brackets): beginning teachers (69 %), mentors (68.7 %), principals (53 %), district coordinators (100 %). No data were received from principals in School District 2.

Approximately 58 % of the beginning teachers in the program were recent university graduates with less than 10 months continuous teaching experience. This is a significant change from the previous year when the figure was 41 %, the lowest ever recorded. The remainder had previous experience, ranging from supply teaching to many years of full-time teaching in other jurisdictions.

Eight out of nine district coordinators reported that they had been able to recruit enough competent mentors. Principals in five districts also reported difficulty recruiting mentors. Across the province, coordinators needed to recruit 28 additional mentors (9 % of the total) after the initial training sessions were completed. Approximately seven out of ten mentors were volunteering for the first time; 97 % indicated they would be willing to act in this capacity again.

Orientation workshops for beginning teachers and training workshops for mentors were organized in every school district. Most were held in September or early in October; workshops in District 2 were delayed until December. Following the initial training sessions, each district organized additional group meetings or workshops. Almost every beginning teacher and mentor rated their district-organized sessions as either "very useful", "useful" or "satisfactory".

The report analyzes data on the frequency of participation by beginning teachers in seven lower-risk and five higher-risk professional activities. Compared to the previous year, there were no statistically-significant changes in participation rates for any of the low-risk activities (e.g. sharing resources, lesson planning, discussing teaching and assessment strategies). Participation rates were similar to previous years – generally in the 93 - 99 per cent range. Although the rates of participation for different activities varied considerably, the levels were considered to be acceptable.

Participation rates in higher-risk activities such as classroom observations and providing feedback about teaching, were slightly lower than in the 2000 survey, which, in turn, was lower than in 1999. Depending on the activity, participation rates ranged from 52 - 75 per cent in the lower frequency categories (cf. Table 5). None of the changes was statistically significant when

comparing 2001 figures to those for 2000. However, the slow erosion in participation rates raised concerns which were discussed in the report's conclusions. Beginning teachers indicated they wanted more opportunities to participate in higher-risk activities, such as observing colleagues teach, observing mentors teach, being observed teaching by one's mentor, and receiving feedback about teaching from one's mentor. Many mentors remain reluctant to observe their partners or to allow themselves to be observed.

All four participant groups continued to strongly recommend the continuation of the BTIP; the levels of support ranged from 96.4 % by mentors to 100 % for principals and district coordinators. Approximately 94.5 % of the beginning teachers and 95 % of the mentors felt that they had personally benefitted from their involvement in the Program. The two problems most frequently mentioned by mentors and beginning teachers continue to be lack of time to participate in activities and being mis-matched with a mentor who has a different grade or teaching assignment. An examination of eight unsuccessful partnerships suggested that closer adherence to the criteria for mentor selection might improve the quality of these partnerships. District coordinators reinforced this point and called for increased involvement of principals in the BTIP.

With very few exceptions, mentors indicated that the Program has been of professional and personal benefit to them. The BTIP provided them with an excellent opportunity for professional growth and development which took five forms: reflection on best practices, collaboration with colleagues, gaining new ideas from partners, observations in other classrooms, and access to resources and funds. Mentors also identified three other benefits of a more personal nature: motivation, friendship, and personal satisfaction.

The Principals' Survey this year did not include any responses from District 2 -- the district with the highest number of participants. Data from the remaining eleven districts indicated that approximately 60 % of principals were either actively or extensively involved in the BTIP; unfortunately, the rate of non-involvement rose from 3 % in 2000 to 10 % this year. While principals generally felt well informed about the Program, six per cent, located in five districts, felt uninformed. Principals were unanimous in recommending continuation of the BTIP.

With one exception, district coordinators perceived that support from their district offices and from the Department of Education was adequate; two coordinators felt that NBTA support was inadequate because of a fixed funding formula which decreases the amount of the grant for each pair of teachers as the total number of participants increases. Three coordinators perceived that principal support was either inadequate or borderline and they called for greater involvement of administrators with partners in their school. Although they often feel overloaded by their many supervisory responsibilities, coordinators still found personal and professional satisfaction from their involvement in this Program. Each of the nine coordinators recommended the program's continuation.

The report concluded with a warning that there are subtle signs of erosion in the levels of satisfaction by participants. Among the reasons for this phenomenon are continuing growth in the number of BTIP participants, fewer coordinators, and decreasing levels of funding. The report called on Education officials to increase funding, to insure continued strong leadership at the provincial level, and to study the impact of district amalgamations on the supervisors who are coordinating the BTIP. Expecting fewer people with diminishing resources to meet the professional needs of more teachers is unrealistic and will inevitably lead to the demise of an extremely valuable program during a critical period when teacher retirements are approaching their peak.

Recommendations

1. In order to prevent further erosion of participant satisfaction, it is recommended that the Department of Education increase funding for the BTIP.

2. With the continuing growth of the BTIP and the amalgamation of school districts, some district coordinators have unmanageable work assignments. Superintendents and/or directors need to insure that enough personnel and resources are available to successfully coordinate the BTIP in each district. It is recommended that directors or superintendents consider appointing more than one person to share the position of district coordinator..

3. The Deputy-Minister of Education needs to insure that the individual who has been newly-appointed to lead the BTIP at the provincial level is provided with the time, resources, and support to successfully manage this important portfolio.

4. District coordinators and principals should carefully scrutinize which new teachers are invited to participate in the BTIP. Teachers with more than two years' previous teaching experience, even in another jurisdiction, should be excluded. Their professional development needs can be better met by other programs.

5. In order to avoid the all-too-common circumstance of teachers being asked to serve as mentors when a new teacher is hired after initial training has been completed, principals and coordinators should invite teachers to take mentor training before an assignment is available. Thus a trained 'mentor pool' will be available to draw on when needed.

6. In districts where there is interest and expertise, coordinators are encouraged to organize workshops specifically to train mentors and potential mentors in classroom observation and conferencing techniques. This could constitute a pilot project to determine if training in these skills will increase participation levels in the higher-risk activities described in Table 5.

7. In order to encourage more principals to assume increased responsibility for BTIP participants in their schools, it is recommended that district coordinators meet regularly with their principals to update them on the Program, to provide them with a copy of the Program Manual, and to make them more familiar with its contents.

8. Non-adherence to the advertised criteria for mentor selection continues to be a source of dis-satisfaction for both mentors and their partners. It is recommended that coordinators regularly review selection criteria with principals and determine the extent to which the supply of competent mentors can meet the demand.

Mentoring New Teachers: A Report on the 2000 - 2001 Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

This is the sixth annual report which has been prepared for the Department of Education in the province of New Brunswick, Canada. The New Brunswick Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) was implemented province-wide in all anglophone districts in September 1995. Previous reports are available from both the Department of Education, Fredericton, NB, (Scott, Smith, & Grobe, 1995; Scott & Compton, 1996; Scott, 1997; Scott 1998; Scott and Surette, 1999, Scott and Doherty, 2000) and the ERIC Database (Resources in Education).

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed description of the reactions of beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district coordinators in the 12 anglophone school districts which participated in the Beginning Teacher Induction program (BTIP) during the 2000-2001 school year. The report is based on data collected by questionnaires sent in May 2001 to each of these four groups. The report attempts to track the evolution of this program by comparing this year's data to those of previous surveys. In addition, it describes participants' reactions to the various program components and makes recommendations for future directions.

Structure and Funding

Until August 31, 2001 the Steering Committee of the BTIP was chaired by Tom Hanley, the Assistant-director of Professional Development and Innovations with the Department of Education. In addition to a representative from the Department of Education, the Committee consists of a representative from the New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA), one Education Faculty member from the University of New Brunswick, and representatives from each of the 12 anglophone school districts. These are usually district supervisors who coordinate the program in their district. With the recent consolidation of several districts under one school superintendent, it has increasingly become the practice to assign responsibility for coordinating BTIP activities in more than one district to a single individual. That accounts for the figure of 9 coordinators in Table 1. To avoid possible confusion caused by the reorganization of school districts during the school year, in this report all districts will be identified according to their September 2000 designations (i.e. unchanged from 1999).

Funding is provided by both the Department of Education and the NBTA which represents only anglophone teachers in the province. The Department transfers to each district $500 for every pair of participants, based on full-time equivalent (FTE) beginning teachers. District Coordinators are responsible for allocating this money to the pairs of beginning teachers and mentors. In a memorandum sent annually to district coordinators, the BTIP Provincial Coordinator reminded coordinators of the intended uses for these funds: a) providing release time for new teachers and their mentors to visit each others' classrooms; b) providing release time for new teachers and their mentors to meet to discuss materials, to review videos, and to dialogue about teaching; c) purchasing materials that focus on the teaching process and support the

professional growth of beginning teachers. The Department of Education's allocations to each district are made available at the beginning of each school year but they must be spent by the end of the budgetary year which ends on March 31.

In addition, the NBTA also provides funding for each pair of teachers (based on FTE beginning teachers). Applications must be completed by beginning teacher/mentor pairs and processed by NBTA staff before cheques are issued. Normally NBTA funds are not available until well into the school year. However, since this funding may be used until the end of the school year in June, it covers the period after the Department of Education funding expires. Since the total funding available from the NBTA is a fixed amount ($35 000), the actual allocation to each pair varies from year to year, depending on the number of pairs. This year, with more participants, the allotment per pair amounted to $116. Grants which were as a high as $300 in 1996-97, have declined each year since: $225 in 1997-98, $165 in 1998-99, $131 in 1999-2000, to the lowest figure this year -- $116.

Introduction to the Study

The Database

Table 1, which follows, shows the number of beginning teachers, mentors, principals and district coordinators who were involved in the 2000 - 2001 Program. It also indicates the number of survey returns in each category and the overall percentage returns on a provincial basis.

Table 1

Numbers, categories, and percentage returns of participants in the BTIP Survey

	Categories of participants			
	beginning teachers	**mentors**	**principals**	**coordinators**
# participants	300	300	134	9
# survey returns	207	191	71	9
% returns	69 %	68.7 %	53 %	100 %

The percentage of survey returns this year was remarkably similar to the 2000 survey. This is somewhat surprising given the fact that, because of an electronic communication problem, no questionnaires were sent to any of the 93 principals in District 2 (Moncton) whose schools had participating teachers.

As earlier noted, although all 12 anglophone school districts participated in the BTIP, only 9 district coordinators are indicated in Table 1 because two coordinators were responsible for multiple districts. Cathy LeBouthillier acted as coordinator for both School Districts 6 and 8 in the Saint John area; Donna Trafford assumed overall responsibility for districts 14, 15, and 16 in the northeast corner of the province.

Table 2, which follows, provides a comparison of the number of participants in each of the years since the BTIP became a province-wide initiative in1995.

Table 2

A five-year comparison of BTIP participant numbers

Groups responding to annual surveys

Survey Years	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principals/schools	Coordinators
1995-96	156	147	96	12
1996-97	125	125	78	12
1997-98	210	210	108	12
1998-99	240	240	130	12
1999-2000	266	263	150	11
2000-2001	300	300	134	9

With the exception of 1996-97, the number of participating beginning teachers has increased each year. The increase this year was 13 %, this represents a 92 % increase since the start of the Program.

Although it is a Program expectation that each beginning teacher will be assigned one experienced teacher to act as his/her mentor, this has not always been the case as the occasional discrepancies between the numbers in these two categories in Table 2 illustrate. Normally one would expect to find equal numbers of mentors and beginning teachers. The discrepancy in 1995-96 occurred when some beginning teachers who were listed as participants were never assigned mentors. There have also been a few other cases in various districts in which one mentor worked with two beginning teachers because no one else was available. If each beginning teacher is assigned one mentor, then the figures will mirror one another. Last year, three mentors reported that they were assigned to work with two beginning teachers each. This year it appears that the intent of the Program was realized and each beginning teacher was assigned a mentor.

Table 3, which follows, provides a comparison of the numbers of induction partnerships in each of the school districts over the six-year period of the BTIP. In effect, it takes the Program totals for beginning teachers which were displayed in Table 2 and breaks them down for each school district. As indicated earlier, school district designations are based on the arrangement of districts at the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year.

While the provincial totals reflected in Table 2 generally indicate the continuing growth of the Program, at the individual district level, patterns are more unique, sometimes with dramatic increases or declines. District 2 in Moncton is a prime example. It began with 40 beginning teachers in 1995, dropped to 22 in 1998 and 1999, but soared to 93 this year. This particular figure alone more than accounts for the overall growth in the current year.

Figures in Table 3 which are marked with an asterisk indicate a discrepancy between the official figures provided by the Department of Education and those provided by the district coordinators. (The figures shown are those provided by the Department.) Although the Department allocates its funds based on full-time equivalent teachers with contracts, some districts which wish to include new teachers on short-term contracts have provided additional funding from local resources. It appears that this year School Districts 2, 12, 13, and possibly others which could not be identified, followed this practice. Although it appears that at least 12 extra beginning teacher-mentor pairs were supported by this arrangement, they are not part of the official statistics used in this report.

Table 3

Distribution of induction pairs among the anglophone school districts during the five years of the provincial BTIP

district	number of induction pairs per school year					
	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01
2	40	36	41	22	22	93*
4	14	5	15	14	9	18
6	1	4	21	7	12	9
8	20	18	30	39	36	37
10	5	5	21	11	40	24
12	7	5	16	28	20	14*
13	5	9	10	23	31	21*
14	3	10	11	10	6	15
15	7	2	2	7	9	3
16	4	5	18	22	22	21
17	15	12	11	24	31	23
18	35	14	14	33	28	22
Totals	156	125	210	240	266	300

Defining Beginning teachers

Definitions of beginning teachers can vary from recent Education graduates without any teaching experience outside of their practicum, to teachers with less than three years' experience. Although we use the term "beginning teacher" to refer to new teachers paired with experienced mentors, for purposes of this survey we attempted to differentiate between beginning teachers who had less than ten continuous months of teaching experience and those who had more. Our analysis of previous BTIP data revealed that many districts were including teachers who, although they were new to their district, had many years of full-time teaching in another jurisdiction. Clearly these were not novice teachers. The percentage of novice (inexperienced) new teachers compared to newly-hired teachers with previous teaching experience has been declining in each of the last three years. In 1998 the figure was 58 % novice teachers; in 1999 it was 50.3 %; in 2000 it was 41.2 %. Three explanations have been offered to account for the declines during these years:

- One was a decision by the Steering Committee to allow long-term supply teachers to be included in the Program when they were "being used to fill a planned vacancy" or when "the teacher would be in place in that position for at least one full term or semester" (September 15, 1999 memo from T. Hanley).
- As the Province moves toward its peak retirement period in 2005, increasing numbers of teachers who have been supply teaching without contracts were finally moving into the teaching profession.
- It is possible that in some districts all new teachers were invited to participate in the BTIP without being screened for previous teaching experience.

This year, 119 of the 207 respondents, or 57.5 %, indicated that they had not taught for 10 continuous months. This figure marks a dramatic turnaround from the statistics of the previous two years – 41.2 % in 2000 and 50.3 % in 1999. The percentage of novice teachers in this year's BTIP marks a return to the ratio achieved in 1998 when it was 58 %. This improvement may be attributed, in part, to concerns about the high percentage of experienced 'beginning teachers' in the Program which were identified in last year's report and initially discussed at the Steering Committee. It appears that subsequent discussions at the superintendency level led to more careful scrutiny of the newly-hired teachers who were included in the Program.

It is interesting to examine the profiles of the remaining 42.5 % of the 'experienced beginners' with more than 10 months of continuous teaching experience. Approximately one-quarter had held long-term supply positions or taught in their district on temporary contracts; one-third had been full-time teachers in other districts in New Brunswick; another third had held full-time positions in other provinces or countries; the remainder had taught in private schools or community colleges. This year, for the first time, mentors were also asked to indicate how much previous teaching experience their partners had. Their responses suggested that 76.4 % had taught for less than four years.

These experienced beginning teachers represent a variety of international backgrounds: teaching French immersion in Louisiana, ESL in Mexico, and teaching in private schools in

Colombia, Kuwait, and New Zealand. The record for most experience goes to two 'beginners' in one district who had each taught for 14 years in another jurisdiction. Other teachers in this same district had taught public school for 5 years in Newfoundland, community college for 7 years, 4 years on a reserve in NB, and 3 years in PEI. Other districts were generally more careful about excluding teachers with more than 2 year's experience. Whereas last year several districts reported percentages of experienced teachers in the 70 per cent bracket, this year the highest was 53 %; only District 6 reported 0 %.

Mentor Recruitment

Eight of the nine coordinators indicated that they had been able to recruit sufficient competent mentors in their districts. Unfortunately the one dissenting voice was responsible for three districts. The suitability of teachers for mentorships remained as a concern. The criteria for mentors outlined in the Program manual - A Guide to the New Brunswick Beginning Teacher Induction Program: A Partnership that Builds Success recommends volunteer teachers with at least five years, strong interpersonal skills, above average teaching ability, and grade or teaching assignments similar to their partners. Ideally they should be located in the same part of the school; teachers holding positions of responsibility should not be considered. Subsequent commentary in this report will provide evidence that in many cases, these criteria were not followed. In one blatant example, a beginning teacher complained that she had taught as many years as her mentor – 2 years!

One of the district coordinators commented that some of the mentors "were quite obviously less competent as mentors than others. It has a lot to do with willingness to take the time required to answer all the questions, help with planning, advise regarding concerns, etc." Furthermore, the coordinators reported that it was necessary to select a total of 28 additional mentors after their initial training sessions were finished. This implies that approximately 91% of the mentors had been identified prior to the training workshops, a slight improvement on the figure the previous year.

Approximately three out of ten mentors had served in this capacity before; twenty-nine had served twice, eleven had served for three years. The highest rates of returning mentors were noted in District 12 (58 %) and District 17 (47 %) where the original teacher induction pilot programs were held; although District 2 had a lower percentage (21 %), in fact it had the largest number of returning mentors at 10. All of the mentors who responded to the surveys in Districts 6 and 13 were first-time mentors.

Professional Activities Supporting the BTIP

Since 1998, all professional activities for the BTIP have been organized at the district or superintendency level by the coordinators. The initial workshop agendas include an overview of the BTIP and an introduction to the Program manual - A Guide to the New Brunswick Beginning Teacher Induction Program: A Partnership that Builds Success. Besides containing

suggestions and guidelines for all participants, the manual specifies five general goals for beginning teachers: orientation to the profession, self-assessment and self-evaluation, moral and practical support, acquisition and refinement of teaching skills, and development of a philosophy of education.

District Workshops

The 2001 Survey data confirmed that initial training sessions were held in all twelve school districts. They tended to be full-day sessions intended to inform all participants about the expectations of the BTIP, to provide an opportunity to meet successful beginning teacher-mentor pairs from the previous year, and to teach skills which would help mentors meet their obligations. In addition, most workshops included an orientation to teaching in the local district. Although there was considerable uniformity in the workshop content, the initial meeting times varied considerably: six districts offered workshops for beginning teachers before school began in August; three started in September, two were held in October; the District 2 workshop was delayed until December because of changes in staffing responsibilities. The coordinator for Districts 6 and 8 organized combined activities for both beginning teachers and mentors. A somewhat similar situation occurred in Districts 14, 15, and 16 which are also in one superintendency. In this region, beginning teachers from all three districts met together; mentors in two of the districts held a combined session; those in the third district met separately.

Only 65 % of the mentors indicated that they had attended the initial training sessions. Three main explanations for non-attendance have been suggested: their partners had not been hired until after the workshop was held; they were not asked to act until after the workshop; because they had been mentors before, they were not required to attend. Those present gave high ratings to the workshop content. Equal numbers rated them as either "very useful" or "useful"; 2 % said they were of "limited value"; no one found the training "useless".

In addition to the initial orientation workshops for beginning teachers and/or mentor training workshops, all of the districts held additional professional development activities during the remainder of the year. Although each coordinator's program was somewhat different, the following schedule which was used in Districts 14, 15, and 16 is representative of others and contains many of the elements expected by the Steering Committee:

- August 24 - full-day workshop for beginning teachers. Topics covered included expectations of the BTIP, classroom management, curriculum for outcome-based education, and district orientation.
- September 15 or 20 - mentor training session (2 hours over supper period).
- October 2 - supper meeting with both mentors and beginning teachers; involved both whole-group and split sessions; focus on planning for the year.
- October 19 - continuation of the October 2 session.

- February - whole day workshop for both beginning teachers and mentors. Topics discussed included classroom management, differentiated teaching, problems/issues.

- June - annual evaluation of the BTIP and closing celebration.

Eighty-five percent of the beginning teachers reported that they had been introduced to the resource, Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 1996) and the majority (45 %) found it "very useful"; 37.5 % rated it as "somewhat useful"; no one felt it was "useless". Although this resource appears to have been utilized in all districts, when asked to identify other resources which they found particularly useful, by far the largest number (49) indicated they liked the printed resources and videos produced by Harry Wong Inc. - The First Days of School (Wong and Wong, 1998). Other resources mentioned several times included Quantum Learning (DePorter et al, 1999), the BTIP Handbook (A Guide to the New Brunswick Beginning Teacher Induction Program: A Partnership that Builds Success) produced by the Department of Education, provincial curriculum guides available in all schools, First Steps, educational web-sites, and The Skillful Teacher (Saphier & Gower, 1987).

Beginning teachers were asked to rate the professional activities planned for them at the district level during the year as "very useful", "satisfactory", or "useless". Given that 207 respondents listed and rated several activities each, the total number of activities rated approached 1000. In total, only 6 activities received a "useless" rating - a remarkable achievement! Virtually all of the teachers found the district activities very useful; many wrote brief notes of appreciation. The high value attached by beginning teachers to these activities has also been a consistent finding in previous BTIP studies.

Local School Level Activities

Despite the importance of the activities organized at the district level, the largest number of BTIP activities occurred at the local school level and involved both the mentors and the beginning teachers. In their questionnaire, beginning teachers were asked to indicate the approximate frequency of their participation in specific activities which have come to be associated with induction programs. This list of typical induction activities was developed from earlier BTIP reports (see bibliography) in New Brunswick and from a review of the literature on teacher induction and mentoring programs. These percentage participation rates, displayed in Tables 4 and 5, provide a picture of the scope and concentration of professional activities pursued by the mentor-beginning teacher partners.

Reports written since1997 have separated the data into activities which present either lower or higher emotional and professional risks to the participants. Table 4 examines participation rates in seven activities which represent lower risk to teachers. Because these activities do not require any special training, teachers generally feel more comfortable participating in them. All these activities require informal contacts and involve discussions of

Table 4

A percentage comparison of beginning teachers' participation rates for specific lower-risk professional activities during Induction Programs from 1996 to 2001

		Frequency				
Professional Activities		**0**	**1-5**	**6-10**	**>10**	***p < 0.05 ****p < 0.01**
1. Make informal contacts with mentor at school	**2001**	0.5	6.5	10	83.5	
	2000	2.2	5.6	10.1	82	
	1999	0.5	6.8	10	81.7	
	1998	1.2	10.5	8.1	80.2	
	1997	1.6	3.2	4.8	90.6	
	1996	4.6	12.3	12.3	70.4	
2. Discuss teaching ideas or strategies	**2001**	1	16	24.5	58.8	
	2000	0.6	16.1	22.2	61.1	
	1999	2.5	14.7	30.4	53.4	
	1998	2.3	20.3	23.8	53.5	
	1997	0	11.7	20	68.3	
	1996	3.1	27.5	23	45.9	
3. Share or research teaching materials, books, etc	**2001**	6	28	18.5	47.8	
	2001	4.5	28.5	17.9	49.2	
	1999	4.2	24.1	28.3	41.4	
	1998	10.5	32.5	19.8	37.2	
	1997	1.6	20.6	33.3	44.4	
	1996	10.7	33.7	16.8	38.2	
4. Discuss curriculum or lesson planning	**2001**	5	24	28.4	42.8	
	2000	3.3	21.1	26.6	49.4	
	1999	2.6	23.6	31.4	40.8	
	1998	7.6	33.3	22.8	36.2	
	1997	3.2	19.4	22.6	54.8	
	1996	10.7	33.7	19.9	35.2	
5. Discuss student assessment or reporting	**2001**	3	29.9	26.4	40.8	
	2000	2.2	28.3	32.8	36.7	
	1999	2.1	29.8	30.9	35.6	
	1998	10.5	37.2	22.7	29.6	
	1997	1.6	27.4	25.8	45.2	
	1996	12.7	30.2	23.8	33.3	

Professional Activities		Frequency 0	1-5	6-10	>10	*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01
6. Discuss classroom management techniques	2001	4.5	34	26.5	35	
	2000	3.9	30.4	28.2	37.6	
	1999	6.8	30.4	33	27.2	
	1998	7.6	31	28.7	32.7	
	1997	0	20.6	27	52.4	
	1996	6.3	36.5	27	30.2	
7. Discuss administrative policies or procedures	2001	7	36	28.4	29.1	
	2000	6.2	36.9	27.4	29.6	
	1999	5.8	37.2	25.7	28.8	
	1998	9.3	39.5	26.2	25	
	1997	1.6	30.6	22.6	45.2	
	1996	6.2	40.6	21.9	23.4	

daily educational concerns. The table compares the rates of participation for the 2000-2001 school year to the five previous years. For analyses of statistical significance, the data collected in June 2001 were compared only to those collected in the previous year. The number of respondents used for the calculation was the number who replied to each individual question. These numbers varied between 200 and 203.

Since table 4 consists of relatively lower-risk activities, one would expect high rates of participation and hence very low rates of non-involvement. When this is the case, the percentages appearing in the first frequency column, will approach zero. The slightly higher figures in the 2001 survey indicate lower rates of participation in activities 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 than in the previous year. However, these small increases were not statistically significant. In the first listed activity, "make informal contact with mentor", the decrease in percentage participation from 2.2 % in 2000 to 0.5 % in 2001 is a mathematical way of expressing the finding that one respondent this year did not have contact with their mentor, compared to four the previous year. (Each 0.5 percent represents one respondent in the 2001 figures.) One could legitimately interpret this individual comparison as an improvement because it implies that only one beginning teacher did not have contact with his/her mentor during the year. If we move to the next column to the right, we see that the 2001 percentage is slightly higher than the percentage for 2000. This indicates an increase in the "1 - 5 contacts" category. If one moves to the far-right column, the 83.5 % also represents a slight improvement in the number of respondents who made contact with their mentor in the "greater than 10 category" compared to the previous year. Naturally this highest frequency category is where the Selection Committee would like to see every beginning teacher.

The previous analysis of the first professional activity was intended to provide a model to help readers interpret other activities in this table. Despite the minor statistical changes in individual categories, overall there were no statistically significant changes in the activity levels

for any of the other activities when comparing statistics for 2001 to those for 2000. This means that there was little change from one year to another in any of these low-risk activities.

The activities listed in Table 5 place higher emotional and professional demands on the participants and may be termed higher-risk activities. This is because traditionally teaching has been an isolated activity which one performed alone, except for occasional supervision from a principal or supervisor. With the exception of the first activity, Table 5 describes activities which involve observing colleagues teach, being observed in the teaching act, or receiving feedback (conferencing) about one's teaching. Perhaps because of its association with supervision and possible criticism, many teachers are reluctant to invite colleagues into their classroom. Consequently, one should anticipate higher percentages of non-participation in the first (0) column and lower percentages in the last column (participation frequency greater than 10) than was the case in Table 4.

A review of the first column of figures (non-participation) reveals that, with the exception of activity 2 (receiving feedback about teaching from one's mentor) the 2001 figures are higher than the figures for 2000. Most of the changes are small; however, there is a - 7.5 % change in activity 4 (observing other colleagues teach). From the Steering Committee's perspective, these developments are undesirable because they indicate increased non-participation in activities which are deemed appropriate for the development of beginning teachers. These findings are doubly troubling when one notes that non-participation rates had increased in all five of these activities in the previous (2000) survey. While none of the changes this year is statistically significant, the trend over the past two years has been in a negative direction to what is desirable. If the reader glances down the far-right column(> 10), slight declines can also be seen in four of the five activities. The greatest change (unfortunately negative) occurred in the decreased number of times that beginning teachers received feedback about their teaching from their mentors. The activity in Table 5 which came closest to statistical significance was observing other colleagues other than mentors teaching in their classrooms. This activity had a p value of 0.29 which falls short of the required significance level of 0.05.

Overall, the results suggest that approximately 52 % of mentors observed their partner teach at least once; only 12 % observed more than five times, yet 76.5 % provided them with feedback about their teaching. From the reverse perspective, beginning teachers reported that during the past year, 48 % of the mentors did not observe them teach and 23.5 % did not provide them with any feedback concerning their class management or use of various teaching strategies. Curiously, these statistics also imply that many mentors were providing feedback without actually having observed their partners teaching in their classrooms. This interesting inconsistency in behaviour has been noted in previous years' data. Also, increased numbers of mentors (39.5 % this year, compared to 37.4 % in 2000) were unwilling to invite their partners into their own classrooms to observe them. This is a tendency which the Steering Committee has previously interpreted as counter to the goals of the BTIP. This behaviour has been discussed before at the provincial level and one would expect that the coordinators have emphasized at their workshops how important it is for mentors to allow their partners to observe them teaching as well as to observe the beginning teachers, but apparently their appeals have either been muted or fallen on deaf ears.

Table 5

A percentage comparison of beginning teachers' participation rates in specific high-risk professional activities during the 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 BTIP

		Frequency				
Professional Activities		**0**	**1-5**	**6-10**	**>10**	***p < 0.05 ****p < 0.01**
1. Meet mentor in scheduled (formal) setting	**2001**	10.8	55.9	19	15.9	
	2000	8.5	54.2	19.8	17.5	
	1999	8.4	50.8	22.5	16.8	
	1998	17	52.3	17.6	13.1	
	1997	14.5	51.6	12.9	21	
	1996	15.3	71.9	4.6	7.6	
2. Receive feedback about my teaching from mentor	**2001**	23.5	47.5	16.5	12.5	
	2000	25	44.3	12.5	18.2	
	1999	16.8	52.4	13.6	14.1	
	1998	26.2	44.2	13.9	15.7	
	1997	27.4	38.7	16.1	17.7	
	1996	27	50.8	15.9	6.3	
3. Mentor observes me teach	**2001**	48	40	6	6	
	2000	47	38.1	6.1	7.2	
	1999	28.8	50.8	6.8	10	
	1998	41.5	45	8.2	5.3	
	1997	46.8	35.5	8.1	9.7	
	1996	46	46	7.9	3.2	
4. Observe other colleagues teaching (not mentor)	**2001**	35	51.5	7.5	6	
	2000	27.5	57.3	10.7	4.7	
	1999	22.5	58.6	10	6.8	
	1998	28.4	58.6	8.3	4.7	
	1997	22.6	62.9	8.1	6.4	
	1996	50	39.1	0	10.9	
5. Observe my mentor teaching in his/her own class	**2001**	39.5	44	7.5	9	
	2000	37.4	46.2	6.6	9.9	
	1999	24.1	52.9	8.4	10.5	
	1998	43.8	42.6	7.7	5.9	
	1997	41.9	35.5	12.9	9.7	
	1996	51.6	40.3	0	8.1	

Beginning teachers were asked to indicate which of the activities, listed in both Tables 4

and 5, they wished had occurred more often. As was the case in the four previous reports, every one of the top four activities selected by the new teachers appears on the list of higher-risk activities in Table 5. In 2001, the activity which the highest percentage (40.6 %) wished had occurred more frequently was "observing other colleagues teaching" (24.7 % in 2000). The second choice was "observing my mentor teaching in his/her own class" (26.5% compared to 22.5 % in 2000); "mentor observes me teach" was third at 25.1% (21 per cent in 2000); "receive feedback about my teaching from mentor" remained fourth with 16.9 % (15.9 percent in 2000). While these results have remained quite consistent from year to year, the increased percentages this year seem to support the Steering Committee's belief in the importance of convincing mentors that these activities are important for beginning teachers' development. Possibly, district coordinators will have to become more intentional in providing both incentives and skills so that more mentors will feel comfortable enough to attempt these higher-risk activities.

In addition to the activities listed in the two tables, the beginning teachers' survey asked if there had been opportunities for beginning teachers to meet other beginning teachers who were also participating in the Program. The data suggest that approximately 86 % of the new teachers had at least one opportunity to meet their peers. While this represents an improvement from the figure of 80 % recorded a year earlier, it is also a return to the previously highest figure of 85 % recorded in 1999. Close to fourteen percent reported that they had more than ten social opportunities of this nature. This too marks an improvement from the 9.5 % figure a year earlier. Although participants still appear to place moderate value on this activity, with the improved opportunities for contact this year, requests for additional opportunities to participate in this activity declined from previous years.

Social contacts between beginning teachers and their mentors remained stable at approximately 73 %; fourteen per cent wished it had happened more often. These figures can be compared to the data for the first activity in Table 5 which suggest that approximately 89 % of the partners met on a regularly-scheduled basis; 11.6 % wished such meetings had happened more frequently. While it may not be possible to draw clear conclusions from these figures, they do provide some evidence that beginning teachers value both formal and informal opportunities to meet with their mentors.

Participants' Perspectives on the Program: Strengths and Weaknesses

Each of the four participating groups was asked whether it recommended the continuation of the BTIP. While principals were asked to respond with a simple "yes" or "no", the other three groups were asked to indicate the degree of their support on a four-point Likert-style scale. If respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed", then this was interpreted as a "yes"; if they "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed", then it translated to a "no". Table 6 provides a six-year comparison of responses.

Table 6 reflects strong overall support for the continuation of the BTIP from all participating groups. The single asterisk draws attention to the fact that questionnaires were not distributed to principals in School District 2; the previous year a similar situation occurred with three groups of participants in District 10.

Table 6

A six-year comparison of recommendations for continuation of the BTIP by beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district coordinators

Group Respondents	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Beginning Teachers	98.3 %	100 %	94.5 %	98.8 %	98.9%+	97.5%
Mentors	91.8	100	96.1	97.7	99.4+	96.4
Principals	90	100	98.8	98	100+	100*
District Coordinators	100	100	100	100	100	100

* District 2 responses missing; + District 10 responses missing.

A closer examination of the responses to the Likert-style questions by beginning teachers and mentors provides evidence of the quality of support for this recommendation. Approximately 65 % of beginning teacher respondents "strongly agreed" with the program recommendation statement; 33 % "agreed" with the statement. These figures compare to 72 % and 28 % in 2000. Naturally, there were fluctuations from district to district, ranging from a high score of 86% to a low score of 55 % in the "strongly agreed" category. Only three individuals in two districts did not recommend the continuation of the BTIP. In other words, there was 100% support for BTIP continuation from beginning teachers in ten of twelve school districts.

For mentors, the 2001 figures were quite similar to the previous year: 64 % (strongly agreed) and 33 % (agreed) compared to 65 % and 35 % in 2000. In both mentors' and beginning teachers' surveys, the "strongly agreed" category received approximately double the responses that the "agreed" category received. Although there is a small, non-significant drop in overall approval from the previous year, these statistics still represents a strong consistent overall endorsement for the continuation of the Beginning Teacher Induction Program.

Beginning Teachers' Perspectives

In the 2001 survey, 94.5 % of the beginning teachers indicated they either agreed (51.9%) or strongly agreed (42.6 %) with the statement, " I feel that overall the BTIP has been beneficial to me as a beginning teacher". This is a slight overall decrease compared to the results of the 2000 survey when 98.3 % of the beginning teachers indicated they either agreed (40 %) or strongly agreed (58.3 %) with the statement. The total is, however, closer to the1999 figure, when the total was 95.7 %. It is interesting to note that the percentages selecting the two positive categories have flip-flopped. In other words, the higher percentages realized for the "strongly agreed" category in 2000 are now reflected in the weaker "agreed" category. Also, the number of beginning teachers who felt they had not personally benefited from the BTIP increased this year to eight from five in the 2000 survey. Six individuals "disagreed" with the statement and two beginning teachers "strongly disagreed". These cases will be examined in the next section.

Mentors were asked to indicate whether, from their perspective, they felt their partners had benefited from the BTIP experience. This year, 94.2 % felt they had, compared to 96.5 % the previous year. This figure is very consistent with the 95 % figure attributed to the beginning teachers' perspective. While one could speculate as to which perspective is likely to be more accurate, there is no statistical significance between these two figures.

Benefits to Beginning Teachers. In their survey, beginning teachers were invited to suggest improvements to the Program and to comment on any of their BTIP experiences. Many of the remarks which follow provide insight into which elements they found helpful. Several beginning teacher appreciated that the BTIP provided help at a crucial time in their development.

> The BTIP is extremely important and necessary. Support of this kind is very crucial during the beginning stages of this career, because often, it can be overwhelming.
>
> - Beginning Teacher in District 2

> Having support and sharing experience with other new teachers was a great asset. Having the opportunity to discuss the good and the bad made me realize that others were in the same boat. We were very fortunate to have such a program available.
>
> - Beginning Teacher in District 16

A second common theme emphasized the value which beginning teachers attributed to the role played by their mentors, who were there to provide advice and emotional support:

> I really appreciated this program. I don't know what I would have done without [my mentor]. She helped me tremendously. The BTIP should never disappear. It is probably the most important thing for a new teacher.
>
> - Beginning Teacher in District 14

> I really enjoyed working with my mentor. Nice to know there is someone you can count on in the school for feedback and help (even though everyone was very helpful at school).
>
> - Beginning Teacher in District 2

> The BTIP was wonderful! I am grateful to have had such a great mentor. [Mentor's name] and I worked very well together and I was very comfortable asking her for any advice. My only suggestion would be to allow time to observe one another, most importantly to be able to observe [my mentor], especially in the beginning.
>
> - Beginning Teacher in District 13

Having an opportunity to observe one's mentor and other colleagues teaching was highly appreciated by those beginning teachers who had the opportunity to do it. While this activity was highly recommended at the initial district workshops, as the previous quotation and Table 5 indicated, some partners were unable or unwilling to participate. The following quotation from another beginning teacher in the same district reflects the importance of this element in the Program and it also indicates that failure to observe others teach was not due to District policy, but more likely due to the attitudes and/or lack of initiative by one or both partners.

> I really enjoyed having the opportunity to watch others teach. The BTIP gave me an opportunity to see what other teachers were doing in their classrooms. As a first year teacher, you have very little time and the BTIP gave me the extra time I needed to do some professional development.
>
> - Beginning Teacher in District 13

Given the geography of our province, sometimes extraordinary factors make observations and getting together with colleagues difficult, as this lengthy comment from a beginning teacher on the island of Grand Manan in District 10 confirms:

> I had a great mentor who had taught French for 10 years. Unfortunately I could not observe her teach as I replaced her as the new teacher. I wish I had been able to see more teachers (I saw one), and discuss issues about teaching a second language at 1 - 5 level. The French dinners or get-togethers that are held on Wednesday evenings for District 10, were not available to me living on Grand Manan. I really had no opportunity to speak French with other teachers. It's too bad that there is a body of water separating me from the other elementary teachers in District 10. I realize there is e-mail, but it is not the same as being able to pop over to a school and observe someone or meet with them informally in person.

Suggestions for Improvements. Although many of the beginning teachers made positive comments about the BTIP, an even larger number responded to the specific intent of the question in the survey by making suggestions for improving the Program. A number of the suggestions were specific to the district organization. For example, in District 6, there was a general request for more meetings; in District 2, which began its program later than other districts, many beginning teachers requested an earlier start and described meeting times as problematic. Feedback of this nature is intended for local organizers who will attempt to improve their delivery for the next school year. There were, however, several suggestions which seemed generic to the overall survey.

Mentor selection criterion was one of the common topics which many beginning teachers addressed. In effect, beginning teachers were reinforcing the criteria for mentor selection which already exist and are listed in the handbook. They wanted volunteer mentors who are experienced teachers, exhibit strong interpersonal skills, teach at the same grade level or teach the same subject and are not in a position of responsibility. Here is a sample of the comments by beginning teachers; this time the district identifications have been purposely omitted:

> I was extremely fortunate to have had [mentor's name] as my mentor. She was incredible!! Unfortunately, some new teachers did not receive one-eighth the support I did. I think mentors should really want to participate in this program.

Mentors need to be carefully chosen. They need to know their expectations fully and be willing to accept all those throughout. Mentors need to be very personable people.

I didn't have a mentor with my background. My mentor was great but different subject background made things difficult. As a result, I went to other schools to meet teachers of my field.

I think this is a very beneficial program, especially if the mentor and beginning teacher are at the same school and grade level. Since I am at a small school with only three teachers and none teaching the same subjects as me, my mentor was from another school. This worked out well, but I can just imagine how easier your year would be with your mentor next door.

It's a bit of a conflict to have an SPR as a mentor (who wants to tell your 'boss' when you feel inadequate).

There should perhaps be a minimum number of years of experience to qualify for mentorship.

Because my mentor is also a fairly new teacher and we have almost the same number of years of experience, it was difficult to relate as a mentor relationship.

From my perspective as a researcher who has read comments like this since the beginning of the BTIP and who also knows that all of the complaints or suggestions for improvement from these beginning teachers have been appropriately addressed in the guidelines provided to organizers, these comments are a poignant reminder that implementation of such guidelines in the field often falls short of the ideal. It also serves as a reminder that the guidelines are valid; when they are ignored or they cannot be met due to local circumstances, then the quality of the BTIP is generally compromised for the beginning teacher and sometimes for the mentor as well.

Beginning teachers also made it clear that they would like more opportunities to meet with their partners, more chances to meet with other beginning teachers, and more opportunities to meet with colleagues who teach at the same grade or subject. While a lack of time and funds seemed to be the underlying causes for these requests, it is also possible that coordinators could accommodate some of these requests given the current level of support. Part of the complaints might be addressed by arranging additional opportunities for beginning teachers to collaborate with peers or veteran teachers or by providing outstanding examples of successful BTIP partnerships from previous years, especially exemplary models who will motivate new participants to be more innovative in their planning at the school level.

Beginning teachers also raised the issue of who should qualify as a beginning teacher. Sentiments were mixed. The first quotation takes the position that only teachers who are new to teaching should be included:

> The program should exist for beginning teachers, not for teachers with several years experience.

An experienced 'beginning' teacher who found himself in a new teaching role took a contrary position when he wrote:

> It is a good program – something useful, not just for a beginning teacher in the system, but also for those teacher who are teaching a new grade level. Changing grade levels alway means you are again a beginning teacher.

Not every experienced participant could rationalize BTIP participation as the previous teacher did. One admitted, "I had 8 years experience prior to teaching here; I am glad to have had the chance to work with [mentor's name], but I felt guilty using BTIP funds". Still another experienced teacher included in the Program suggested another option: "Perhaps teachers who have had experience beyond this district could have more of a choice about participating. Still it was a helpful experience." Another experienced beginner lamented a lost opportunity when she wrote, "I would have valued this program the first year I taught full-time in 1997-98." The value of this program to teachers in their first year was also the subject of a teacher who was overlooked because she did not have a permanent contract:

> [The] program was wonderful – an excellent idea. I can't think of any improvements; however, one suggestion. Last year, my first year of teaching, I was lucky to receive two long-term supply positions. The first was from September to March and the second from May to June. Although I was not working under a contract in September, I was performing the duties of a regular teacher in every sense. The staff and administration were more than helpful, but I feel that is was then more than this year that I could have benefited from a mentor and the BTIP.

This very issue was addressed by the Steering Committee the year the teacher refers to, but for unknown reasons she did not benefit from the policy change. Long-term supply teachers who will be on payroll for one full term can now be included in the BTIP. A few districts previously included them using local budgets, prior to the policy change.

Unsuccessful Partnerships. In the 2001 survey, eight unsuccessful partnerships were identified. An unsuccessful case was one in which the beginning teacher either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "I fee that overall the BTIP has been beneficial to me as a beginning teacher." It is useful to examine these cases in order to identify the elements which led to their failure. Hopefully, such an analysis will result in insights which will alert coordinators to prevent or correct similar situations in the future.

Of all the unsuccessful cases, only one involved a novice teacher. Details are a bit sketchy, but the teacher in this case rated her professional development activities as satisfactory; apparently, due to time pressures and different teaching assignments, she and her mentor did not

participate in the suggested school-based activities. This teacher offered a solution to her own dilemma when she suggested "more time, or a mentor who has the same spare to discuss things".

Cases two and three are similar in that they appear to have been unsuccessful due to indifference or preoccupation on the part of the mentor partner. The case two teacher, who had at least three years teaching experience, indicated that she wanted to participate more frequently in many of the recommended activities. Her comment which follows, implies that her mentor had little time for her and when they met, it was rather begrudgingly:

> Many meetings with my mentor in which I informally asked for advice or suggestions were rushed between classes. More designated time during school hours to meet with mentor [is needed].

In the third case, a beginning teacher with some previous experience, indicated that her mentor was in the midst of moving outside the school district and that this preoccupied her mind. Although she did manage to observe one colleague teach, she did not observe or receive feedback from her mentor. They did discuss some teaching issues, but as the following quotation indicates, the beginning teacher sensed that the mentor's heart was not in the discussion:

> I would have liked to have a mentor who would have had more time for me and I would suggest the mentor reside in the same area. I really enjoyed having someone to talk to, but felt like I was often rushed because of my mentor's location and desire to leave our school.

Case four involved a teacher who had previous long-term supply experience plus a "D" (temporary) contract. She rated the professional development activities organized by the district as satisfactory; contacts with her mentor were relatively infrequent (1 - 5 category). They did not meet on a formal basis; however, the beginning teacher did have an opportunity to observe her mentor and other colleagues teach. She indicated that she wished such observations had happened more often. Lack of time to meet and unclear BTIP expectations were cited as problems. This teacher wrote that her failure to benefit from the Program was "perhaps due to my lack of participation". Her elaboration of that brief comment infers that she is not feeling the pressure a novice teacher might feel to get help on a more regular basis:

> This year, I have concentrated on being prepared for my own classes, and I discuss issues with my mentor and other teachers as they arise. I know I could have benefited from the programme but I feel I also get what I need through experience and the support, advice, and suggestions of my colleagues. This programme has a lot to offer, however, the timing of certain sessions made it difficult to participate to the extent I should have. Thanks for your efforts!

The fifth teacher to feel she had not benefited from the Program had a profile quite similar to the previous person. She had taught for two years outside the province; she found that the location of her partner's room and lack of time to meet inhibited participation. Her brief

comment questions whether she should have been included in the Program: "The Program should exist for 'Beginning Teachers', not teachers with several years experience." Another teacher with 14 years' experience teaching in various positions both in and outside of the public system, did not say whether she benefited, but she implied that she did not belong there when she wrote, "I never considered myself a beginning teacher". Consequently, her participation was rather limited.

Despite the understandable reaction of these 'experienced beginning teachers', many other veteran teachers who also found themselves in the BTIP still felt that they had personally benefited. Another teacher who had also taught French core and immersion for 14 years in another district, participated extensively and, as this quotation suggests, was thankful for being included:

> I really enjoyed working with my mentor. [It was] nice to know there is someone you can count on in the school for feedback and help at the same grade level (even though everyone was very helpful in the school).

The final three cases of teachers who felt they had not benefited are each unique. The Case Six teacher had one year of previous teaching experience; she gave positive ratings to the district professional development activities; her frequency of in-school activities fell well within the normal pattern. Although she complained that BTIP expectations were unclear and that access to funding was difficult, her main concern seemed to be that the Program had neither provided enough feedback on teaching nor enough discussion about classroom management. This quotation implies that she felt like a beginning teacher whose specific needs were not satisfied: "[The BTIP] needs to be more focussed on actual beginning teacher's needs and the different needs based on level".

The seventh example involved a case of a mentor and beginning teacher who were mis-matched from a language perspective. This teacher had two long-term supply positions prior to participation in the BTIP. She found the district-organized activities helpful, but wrote that organizers need to "match people according to subjects (or at least language) taught." Because of the problems created by the mentor mis-match, this teacher took the initiative and "chose someone more related to my field" to observe, to share resources with, and with whom to discuss teaching strategies and ideas.

The final case involved personal incompatibility between the mentor and beginning teacher. The teacher had unspecified previous experience, but still rated the district-led activities very highly. Although remote room location created difficulties, it was very clear that this man and his mentor did not form a bond. Other than the formal (required) meetings, they rarely met informally. This teacher was one of the two who "strongly disagreed" that the partnership had been personally beneficial. He suggested that two criteria were essential for successful partnerships: "mutual agreement between the mentor and beginning teacher to work together" and the "same school setting". The latter comment may imply that they taught in different schools.

Persistent Problems. The problems encountered at the local level by beginning teachers and mentors in the BTIP or other induction programs are reasonably well known from previous studies and from the literature. Virtually all of these factors were mentioned in the previous section; in extreme circumstances they led to unsuccessful partnerships. In many cases, however, while these situations created difficulties, participants still felt that the overall experience had been beneficial.

In addition to identifying these persistent problems, a second purpose of this survey item is to determine the extent to which progress is being made in addressing these obstacles. All beginning teachers were asked to indicate which of the conditions listed in Table 7 caused problems for them during the term of the program. By comparing the percentages of teachers who experienced specific difficulties this year with the figures for previous years, it is possible to see whether overall progress is being made and which particular conditions need to be addressed.

The leading problem areas for induction partners remains lack of time. It is not clear whether this means difficulty finding time in a busy teaching schedule to meet informally with one's mentor or obtaining supply days free of teaching responsibilities for observations, conferencing, planning, and discussion of teaching issues. Possibly both situations apply in many schools. One of the district coordinators provided an interesting insight into the shortage of time when she noted that:

> Although quite a few teachers expressed time as a problem on their surveys, they probably meant finding the time to meet with their mentor as the issue. Most of the pairs still had days they never used.

Table 7

A comparison of the percentage of beginning teachers in the 1997 - 2001 induction programs who reported experiencing specific problems

condition causing problems	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
lack of time	60	67.8	66	57	57.5
different teaching assignment to mentor	22	30.4	29.3	23.6	22.7
location of classroom relative to mentors	15	5.5	12.6	13	13
other (unique situations)	15	12.1	11	7.7	10.6
difficulty accessing BTIP funds	22	29.3	11	4.4	6.3
unclear expectations for BTIP	19	17.2	4.7	1.7	7.7
personal incompatibility with mentor	0	1.7	2.1	0.6	1.9

Having a grade level or teaching assignments which was different from one's mentor caused the second most number of difficulties for beginning teachers. This well-recognized perennial problem was explored in a previous section under the heading "suggestions for improvements".

Respondents were asked which of the identified conditions caused significant problems for them. Eighteen of the 119 individuals (15 %) felt that lack of time created significant

difficulties for them. This marked a decline from 26 % in the 2000 survey. Nine of the 47 teachers (19%) who complained about different teaching assignments from their mentors indicated this caused significant problems; seven of twenty-seven or 13 % indicated inconvenient room location created major problems. The last two percentages are almost exactly the same as the previous year. It may be difficult to achieve further improvements in these areas.

It is interesting to note that the figures for both "difficulty accessing BTIP funds" and "unclear expectations for BTIP" which had dropped dramatically since 1998, have crept up slightly. It is worth noting, however, that only one person felt either of these conditions caused significant problems for them. The condition which most often had a significant effect on a partnership was personal incompatibility. Although the numbers affected are relatively small, the impact on three of the four teachers (75 %) who found themselves with an incompatible partner, was by their own report, rather significant. The solution to incompatibility appears to lie in early disclosure to BTIP organizers or school administrators by those affected. If the possibility of this occurring is acknowledged at the initial meetings, then teachers may feel less embarrassment when asking for a change of partners, and more of these unpleasant situations may be avoided.

The catch-all category of "Other Problems" received the fourth highest number of votes - 22 representing 10.6 per cent. Of these, eight or 36.4% were deemed as causing significant problems. Although several were unique, many have been persistent problems in previous reports. The difficulty of finding an appropriate mentor for an itinerant teacher was mentioned twice; two beginning teachers reported that their late intake into the BTIP caused them to miss valuable inservice training; one felt that the late assignment of a mentor had a negative impact; two teachers reported that when their mentors received educational leave during part of the year, no one replaced them. In a comparable case, a mentor who moved out of the district was not replaced. A beginning teacher sensed that there was a supply teacher shortage in her district and consequently did not feel right requesting one so she could meet with her mentor or observe colleagues teach.

Among the unique problems was a serious injury which sidelined a new teacher for four months. A new teacher reported that her mentor, who was a second-year teacher, understandably lacked the experience to be an effective mentor. One teacher claimed that BTIP meetings conflicted with his extra-curricular responsibilities; another said that lack of common preparation time caused difficulties.

Mentors' Perspectives

Mentors generally are teachers with at least five years' teaching experience, strong interpersonal skills, and a reputation for better-than-average teaching ability. Although many are volunteers, it is not uncommon for administrators to recruit them. This year, 71% were first-time mentors. The previous year the figure was higher, at 75%. Twenty-nine of the respondents were mentors for the second time, eleven for the third time; six had served four or more years.

Although significant numbers of teachers were repeat mentors, each year the BTIP provides over one hundred experienced teachers with a unique professional development opportunity. Hence, it is important to survey this group in order to learn the Program's impact on them as well as on their partners.

Benefits to Mentors. Despite the fact that both the expressed and the intended purpose of the BTIP is to support beginning teachers, the mentor survey data indicate clearly that mentors feel that they also benefit professionally from the Program. Possibly the strongest evidence of this is the finding that 95.3% of the mentors agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I feel that overall the BTIP has been beneficial to me from a professional perspective". While this finding is a profound endorsement that this induction program has an impact on this group of "care-givers", the 2001 figure represents a slight decline from the 96.5% figure recorded in the 2000 Survey and the 98.2% figure in 1999. Translated into individual teachers, this year's percentage means that 181 out of 190 respondents felt that they had benefited personally and professionally from their involvement with the BTIP.

The mentors' survey asked the experienced teachers what had been the positive aspects of participation in this program. It also asked what mentors disliked about their role. It seems worth noting that the list of positive aspects ran to nine type-written pages while the list of dislikes was only half as long. Virtually every mentor responded to the first question; many wrote long replies explaining how they had personally benefited from their involvement. The recurring themes appear to fit into the same four categories as in the 2000 Survey:

1. Professional Growth and Development
   - reflection on best practices
   - collaboration with colleagues
   - gaining new ideas from partners
   - observations in other classrooms
   - access to new resources and funds

2. Personal Satisfaction

3. Motivation

4. Friendship

The mentors' comments indicated clearly that the BTIP provided them with many opportunities for **professional growth and development.** This theme revealed itself in several forms which have been classified here as sub-themes.

Reflection on best practices was the sub-theme mentioned most often. In the course of attempting to help their partners, mentors frequently found themselves re-examining their own practices. Such self-evaluation often resulted in insights which led to professional growth. The following quotations attempt to capture the reflective nature of this sub-theme.

> The most positive aspect of being a mentor teacher involves the opportunity to reflect on what I do and why I choose to do it that way. Some things I had never questioned before, and now I have to explain or justify to someone. This has helped me see my teaching from a different perspective.
>
> - District 14 Mentor

> It has helped me reflect on my own practice. Knowing that another teacher is looking at you as an example of good practice forces you to be the best you can be.
>
> - District 2 Mentor

Table 5 implies that slightly over half the mentors observed their partners teach. One mentor who modelled teaching techniques in her partners' classroom found herself reflecting on her own practices. She felt that this made an important contribution to her professional growth:

> When I modelled some teaching techniques in her classroom and then see her use them; I have grown professionally because I have had to rethink and evaluate my teaching practices as a model.
>
> - District 13 Mentor

As one might expect, mentors did not draw distinctions between the various sub-themes identified by the researcher. In the following quotation from a District 2 mentor, reflection is combined with a second sub-theme**, collaboration with colleagues:**

> Collaboration with peers is always beneficial, especially if at the same grade level. Discussions between teachers on curriculum issues, activities, teaching or professional practice brings further reflection and understanding of both.

A mentor in District 18 described how she valued "the comradeship that developed between my colleague and myself; having the opportunity to team teach with her; observing the new teacher bloom in her subject area." Another mentor in the same district liked "getting together to talk about different things; it has been a mutual learning experience; we have formed a good teaching relationship." A District 12 mentor wrote that it was "good to have someone to talk to, both about programs at the grade level and about problems concerning students; [I] enjoyed getting to know our new staff member." Many other mentors echoed this sub-theme in various ways.

Year after year, mentors report that they **gain new teaching ideas** from their less experienced partners. Our third sub-theme acknowledges this finding. A mentor in District 2 who is nearing retirement expressed both this common sentiment and the motivational impact of working with an enthusiastic, young teacher:

> [I have appreciated] learning new approaches even as I get ready to retire in a few years. A fresh perspective on all aspects of teaching has given me a boost in motivation for my own teaching – seeing and meeting other new teachers in the district.

Earlier, beginning teachers attributed high value to **observations in other schools and classrooms** -- sub-theme four. Mentors also agreed that such activities were a valuable form of professional development. A mentor in District 18 wrote: "It was particularly beneficial to be

able to visit another school and to make observations of two very different perspectives." A mentor from a middle school in District 8 described gaining new insights when she visited an elementary classroom:

> Having had the experience to observe in an elementary setting was great. The contrast versus middle school with respect to student interest was amazing.

Access to new resources and funds constitutes our final sub-theme. Although many mentors and beginning teachers asked for increased funding to purchase additional time and more materials, it was evident that they appreciated those benefits which did accompany the Program. Most beginning teachers were given a copy of the resource, Enhancing Professional Practice: A framework for teaching, by Charlotte Danielson (1996). Many mentors and their partners used the videos on teaching or written materials produced by Harry K. Wong, Incorporated. A mentor in District 10 wrote:

> A great enticement for teachers to act as mentors is that the program allows time to help the beginning teacher. It's great to have a supply day to do unit planning and discuss issues rather than having to do everything after school when everyone is feeling tired. If matches are well made, it also promotes team work and sharing ideas and materials.

A second theme in the mentors' comments clearly indicated that many took **personal satisfaction** from their helping roles as mentors. Being able to contribute to the well-being of a colleague can also have a positive psychological impact on the helpers as well. While these two quotations help illustrate this point, the second quotation is also a reminder that in helping we are also helped ourselves:

> I love helping people. I have also learned a great deal myself. It was great helping someone with the numerous small details that I did not receive help with as a new teacher. I have also made use of his university books and more current information that [my partner] has made available.
>
> - District 2 Mentor

> Sharing ideas with my partner helped me grow professionally; being able to help a colleague was very satisfying. My partner was able to put me back on track and encourage me when I also needed it.
>
> - District 4 Mentor

The sentiment that it felt good to help a colleague was expressed by many mentors in a variety of ways. A mentor in District 6 said, that "sharing new and old ideas helped to boost my self-esteem"; a colleague in District 8 wrote that it "felt good looking out for a younger teacher"; another in the same district remarked that "it is rewarding to see progress being made with a new teacher." Finally, a mentor in District 10 exclaimed that she was "pleased to be consulted for my expertise". Being selected as a mentor was a form of recognition which clearly brought personal

satisfaction to many experienced teachers who have too few opportunities to be recognized for their professional expertise. This pride was also evident in the words of a District 13 mentor who described "watching the beginning teacher's skills grow along with her confidence." The final quotation in the section belongs to a mentor in District 18, who wrote:

> I thank you for the opportunity to be of service to the next generation of teachers. Because of this program, I know that it will benefit our children and that is what it's all about.

Mentors found that the enthusiasm of their younger colleagues provided a source of **motivation** for them. This third theme is captured in the following quotation which also combines elements of the previous theme:

> I felt very flattered when [my partner] wanted me to be her mentor; after we had gotten to know one another a bit, she felt that she would benefit from working with me. I enjoyed her motivation, excitement and willingness to work hard for her class. This was a motivator for me.
>
> - District 13 Mentor

These quotations from four mentors in District 2 make it clear that their association with younger, enthusiastic, and energetic young teachers had a motivational effect on them. This same sentiment was expressed here by other mentors from various districts.

> I have become more aware of maintaining a positive attitude; renewed enthusiasm; a different challenge.

> Working with a young and energetic teacher is very motivational.

> These new teachers have marvellous new ideas and methodologies. They are fresh and keen – remind us of the reasons why we chose this profession.

> Being a mentor teacher has revitalized me; young teachers have so much energy and enthusiasm. It's catching!

The final theme, **friendship,** relates somewhat to the previous themes of collegiality and personal satisfaction. Although mentioned by the mentors less often than the other themes, sufficient numbers of mentors mentioned the friendships which grew out of their mentoring experience, that it deserves to be identified as one of the common benefits which teachers realized from their role as a mentor. A mentor in District 8 expressed her developing friendship as a "chance to get to know another member of the staff in a personal way". Another wrote:

> We had a wonderful experience that went beyond our sessions. We have formed a wonderful relationship such that [my partner] has come to me several times to ask questions or to seek advice. I am so pleased she feels she can do that.
>
> - District 13 Mentor

Persistent Problems for Mentors. The Mentors' Survey asked mentors what aspects of the BTIP they disliked. Unlike the closed question posed to the beginning teachers, this one was open-ended. Despite this, several of the mentors responses tended to mirror those of their partners: time issues, teaching similar grades or subjects, and being located near to one's partner in the building. Other issues, such as dealing with personnel/staff problems, and the preparation of some new teachers, were uniquely mentors' problems.

As was the case with beginning teachers, time-related issues dominated the mentors' list of persistent problems: the shortage of time to meet, the timing of district meetings, and the difficulties created when partners did not have common preparation periods. A few illustrative quotations follow; district designations have been purposely omitted:

> Because of time demands, it was difficult to conference. I believe that mentoring programs should be time-tabled into the teachers' schedules to insure proper observation time and follow-up time.
>
> Time is a factor for all of us. We would like to have had more time to share ideas, work on curriculum, and develop themes together.
>
> Having meetings at supper time can be difficult when you have a family. However, if you know ahead, arrangements can be made.
>
> It is time consuming, but I would do it again.

Quite a number of mentors, like the beginning teachers, objected strenuously to being paired with a partner who taught a different subject area in which they had no background. This appeared to be more, but not exclusively, a secondary school phenomenon:

> [I] did not like being coupled with a teacher in French immersion, as I felt I did not have the answers for curriculum questions.
>
> We were on different grade levels, so had different preps, different noon hours, and after school, teacher had to leave – hard to see each other. It was not a dislike, but more of a frustration.
>
> He taught French and I taught English. I felt it would have been more efficient as a mentor had our subject area and language been the same.

Several mentors encountered situations which required interpersonal skills which they lacked or for which they had not been prepared. This made them feel uncomfortable:

> I find it difficult to tell a peer of weakness, especially those which relate to a personal character i.e. when it interferes with communication and a student's education.

> [I felt uncomfortable] knowing that a teacher has been treated unfairly or inappropriately by a colleague and try to advise this person on how to handle it.
>
> [I disliked] knowing the new teacher was experiencing rejection from her team and not having the power to change those dynamics for her.

Two mentors expressed frustration when they were partnered with recently graduated beginning teachers who, in their opinion, had not been adequately prepared at the university level. One of them expressed her thoughts this way:

> It was difficult trying to compensate for the beginning teacher's lack of knowledge of curriculum, lesson planning, and teaching methodology. I always felt like I was a cooperating teacher working with a teacher intern. I expected that new teachers would be able to read a curriculum document and create a lesson plan from it. In this case the beginning teacher was confused with a curriculum document and a text resource.

Principals' Perspectives

One hundred thirty-four schools participated in the 2000-2001 BTIP. This was sixteen fewer than the previous year; since the overall number of participants increased, this translated into more partnerships in fewer schools. Each principal was asked to respond to a questionnaire. Unfortunately, due to a mix-up, the forms were not sent to principals in School District 2, which had the largest number of participants. Despite this, the number of returns from principals province-wide remained almost identical to the previous year at 53% when there were not returns from another school district. Prior to the 2000 Survey, the percentage of questionnaires returned by principals was in the 75 - 80 per cent range.

The principals' questionnaire asked administrators to select the extent of their personal involvement in the BTIP from four categories each of which is described as it was in the Principals' Survey:

- **No Involvement**. A principal with no involvement is aware of the program but generally lacks detailed information and does not get directly involved with the participants.
- **Minimal involvement** describes principals who are aware of the program and who try to be supportive, but their actual involvement consists of peripheral contacts like passing on memos, making suggestions, or asking occasional questions about the program.

- The third level, **active involvement**, combines the characteristics described in category two with the active components of selecting mentors and/or arranging supply teachers for the partners.

- Finally, **extensive involvement** describes those principals who become very involved with the BTIP. In addition to category 3 activities, they attend and/or arrange meetings, debrief participants, and in extreme cases, act as mentors themselves.

Table 8, which follows, compares the levels of involvement for this year's principals with the previous year. It compares only the last two years because it is only during these years that the participation categories were described in the questionnaire and principals were able to select the one which best described their level of involvement. The figures need little explanation. The rate of non-involvement increased approximately three times this year. This will likely be interpreted by the Steering Committee as a negative development, as their goal has been to encourage greater administrator involvement. On the other hand, the number who classified for the active category grew by roughly 5 % – apparently a positive change. I suspect that BTIP promoters and organizers would encourage at least one administrator in every participating school to strive either for active or extensive involvement (categories 3 or 4). If true, then there is clearly a challenge for next year's organizers.

Table 8

A two-year comparison of principal involvement in the BTIP

categories	percentage involvement	
	1999-2000	2000-2001
1. No Involvement	3.3%	10.2%
2. Minimal Involvement	42.5	30.5
3. Active Involvement	51.1	56.5
4. Extensive Involvement	3.3	2.8

It is worth noting that these provincial statistics omit the observation that the rates of principal involvement in some districts were well above the provincial figures displayed in Table 8. In fact, seven districts had no one in the "no involvement" category while in four districts over 70% of the responding principals rated themselves as being actively or extensively involved. It is important to recognize their efforts and encourage other districts to imitate them.

One principal wrote, "On paper I was actively involved, however in reviewing the year, I should have participated more". Several commented on their efforts to find additional time for more involvement in an already busy schedule. A principal in District 13 made a helpful suggestion:

> Perhaps if an outline of the BTIP could be sent out to principals with beginning teachers each year, it could include the number of days granted and resources recommended.

Clearly, this administrator wants more information about the Program in order to increase his or her involvement. Another principal in the same district said that he planned to "create a schedule that will permit me to increase my participation." Obviously the will is there; ways and means to accomplish that will need support from the District Office.

Were principals receiving clear, comprehensive, and timely information about the BTIP? The Principals' survey asked this question. In seven districts, 100 % of the principals said, "Yes!" Across the province, the average was 94 % positive responses; 6 % replied in the negative. Only one district appeared to be weak in this area. These statistics mark an improvement over the 85 % positive responses of the previous two surveys. The coordinators appear to be doing a very good job of communicating with the principals; despite their best efforts, a few still feel left out of the loop, but their numbers are declining. Some of these people requested that special consideration be shown for principals of schools which are late entering the Program or where an acting principal is appointed during the year. In cases like these, differentiation strategies are needed to bring these principals up to speed with their colleagues.

Program Strengths. It was very evident from their surveys that principals were generally very appreciative of the BTIP. The strongest evidence of this is the fact that 100 % of them recommended the continuation of the provincial induction program

Principals were asked to respond to the open-ended question, "From your perspective, which elements of the BTIP do you think are working well?" Many principals indicated they felt that the overall Program worked well, however, the mentor-beginning teacher partnership was specifically mentioned by 28 principals. A principal in District 4 expressed this idea succinctly:

> As a seasoned teacher, I like to see the confidence that increases as the mentor/mentee relationship develops. Relationship is the heart of our craft.

Others who agreed that the mentoring relationship was the heart of the BTIP included in their concept of mentoring such activities as sharing information and classroom observation. Ten principals singled out the supportive environment which the Program promotes as exemplary; five others nominated two associated concepts – collaboration and collegial relationships.

Principals also directed a lot of their comments toward the selection of a mentor. Several elaborated on the importance as well as the difficulty of finding proper matches. In fact, principals in five districts reported difficulty recruiting competent volunteer mentors. One said, "More thought needs to go into the matching of teachers. If that is done well, they make it work". Another referred to the difficulty of finding appropriate mentors in a small school. In this case, a mentor was found in a larger school nearby, but that solution can sometimes create other problems.

Although the mentoring process also included this activity, several principals specifically drew attention to the importance they attached to classroom observations and visits to other schools. They viewed this as an important element of the BTIP which they wanted to encourage.

However, the principals identified two major obstacles: lack of funding and a shortage of supply teachers. Many principals called for more time for in-class mentoring as well as observation in other classrooms. They believe these powerful elements need to occur more often:

> Classroom visits to shadow the mentor and share the experiences one handles in a class. Discussions centred on teaching and discussing problem areas and coming up with solutions to try. Reflecting on them and how effective they were in solving the areas of concern.
>
> - District 6 Principal

Two principals mentioned that they thought classroom visits which used Enhancing Professional Practice (Danielson, 1996) added to their value. Another who seemed unfamiliar with this resource, asked for a framework to focus discussion following observations.

Twelve principals felt that release time was another useful element because it permitted teachers to address their own needs. Consequently, they suggested more release time would benefit the participants. Principals called for more flexible, open-ended time in addition to the time which already exists for district-led professional development opportunities.

Three principals acknowledged that an effective mentoring program benefited them directly. A principal in District 16 observed that, "The Program helps lessen the load of a principal, especially if the mentor is keen." Another in District 6 recognized that a mentoring program can motivate veteran teachers who have been coasting:

> Certainly any mentoring time is good for both the new teacher and the mentor. This is valuable for everyone involved. This might be a good idea to propose to those more experienced, less keen individuals who are counting their sick days and the time left until they retire. Such an opportunity offered during school time might make a difference. Who knows?

The answer to this question is that over the years of the BTIP in New Brunswick, principals, district coordinators, and mentors themselves have acknowledged the motivational impact of a mentoring assignment. Many veteran teachers who agreed to be mentors have appreciated the recognition of their expertise and reacted professionally to this challenge. Their comments have clearly shown that it has given them a new perspective on teaching and injected new energy into their efforts.

Suggestions for Improvement. Principals were asked to offer suggestions for improving the BTIP. A principal in District 4 wrote, "I don't feel improvement would be the correct word. More to build upon – more regular meetings for new teachers, continuation of the program past the first year." Another, in District 8, said,

> This is an important program that has been evolving and will surely be of great importance in the next several years as more new teachers enter practice.

Despite the plaudits, administrators had a number of helpful suggestions which have been listed below. I have attempted to select representative comments. The words belong to the principals; some echo themes previously developed by beginning teachers and mentors.

- I find the program works best when new teachers have something in common with experienced teachers. i.e. same curriculum
- More work with principals emphasizing their role and responsibility; create non-public awareness with an organization.
- encourage BTIP teachers/mentors to share their experiences with schools, both formally and informally.
- Reduce work load for mentors. This means more funded teacher positions.
- Co-operating teacher needs training; mandatory shared time – experienced teacher is freed up to teach in the beginning teacher's classroom as a model.
- Encourage visitations to various classrooms for observations of "Best Practices".
- Ensure mentorship begins at the beginning of the year.
- Teachers new to the program who have been in the system already for a while are less acceptable or open to new ideas and suggestions from their mentors. They tend to continue in the same way they have up to this point.
- Concern for long-term supply teachers who need this very much.
- More recognition for teachers who are effective mentors.
- As always, more time, money, and PD opportunities for both mentors and beginning teachers.

Naturally some of these suggestions apply more to certain district than others; however, it is expected that district coordinators who collect the surveys will scrutinize the comments carefully and take ideas from them which they can attempt to implement the following year.

District Coordinators' Perspectives

The declining number of district coordinators involved in the BTIP reflects the down-sizing and amalgamation of school districts which has occurred in the New Brunswick public school system in recent years. Prior to the 1999 - 2000 survey, twelve coordinators were responsible for twelve school districts; in 2000, the number was reduced to eleven; this year that number was further reduced to nine! This, despite the fact that the number of partnerships has increased. This year, one person acted as coordinator for both School Districts 6 and 8 -- districts with large school populations in southern New Brunswick; another individual coordinated the programs in Districts 14, 15, and 16 -- districts which encompass large areas in the northeast of the province. District 12 continued to demonstrate leadership and model collaborative coordination by sharing responsibilities among its district supervisors.

Seven of the district coordinators had prior experience (they averaged 5.3 years) with the BTIP . Two coordinators were first-year appointments; eight of the nine felt that they were logical choices for coordinating the Program in their district. The ninth, a rookie, questioned her appointment.

The coordinators were asked if they felt they had received adequate support from the Department of Education, the NB Teachers' Association, their district office, and school principals in their own district. Table 9 records their responses to this question.

Table 9

District coordinators perceptions of support from different BTIP stakeholders

	Levels of Perceived Support		
Stakeholders	**Adequate**	**Inadequate**	**Borderline**
Dept of Education	8	1	
NBTA	7	2	
District offices	8		1
School principals	6	2	1

One coordinator felt that support from the Department of Education was inadequate because overall funding was inadequate. Two coordinators categorized support from the New Brunswick Teachers' Federation as inadequate; insufficient funding was cited as the reason. As indicated earlier in this report, the total contribution by the NBTA has not changed, but as the number of participants increases, the allocation per partnership decreases in proportion. One coordinator who mentioned this issue anticipated improved support:

> The NBTA requires hoops to pass through for budgeting – never know how much will be there, but I guess that is being remedied. Also some changes in their support are happening.

Another coordinator, reflecting on how his/her district responded to this problem, observed that "Some schools do things on their own for the beginning teachers. In these instances it supplements the Program."

All but one coordinator agreed that support from district administrators and support staff was adequate; the lone dissenter rated it as borderline. Support took various forms. In a district with geographical challenges, the coordinator wrote, "District office staff (supervisors) checked in with many of the beginning teachers and reported any great or less-than-great things they found."

Two coordinators rated principals' support as being inadequate; another said it was borderline. Principals' support continues to be perceived as weaker than that from other quarters. Furthermore, this year's result is relatively worse than the 2000 Survey. Opinions on administrative support varied, but several coordinators took time to explain their concerns. Their comments follow:

> Generally I found the principals to be supportive – they certainly are supportive of the Program itself. I had some concerns throughout the year that maybe one or two principals turned much of the responsibility over to

the mentor. I recognize that it is sometimes difficult to get mentors, but for another year I think I would spend more time with the principals talking about mentor selection. We need mentors who are willing to devote a considerable amount of time to their beginning teacher and we need mentors who are positive, upbeat, and current.

- District Coordinator

We, in the Program, need more principal involvement. We may need to better define how much and where and when, because principals can make beginning teacher's lives very good.

- District Coordinator

While I appreciate the financial support of the NBTA and the Department, I am continually surprised by the lack of ownership principals take for the BTIP. If communication is identified as an area of improvement, principals should make more of an effort to become actively involved in the BTIP and recognize that BTIP is only one of the supervisor's responsibilities. As an instructional leader, I feel principals need to recognize themselves as the first agent of change in the life of the beginning teacher in their school.

- District Coordinator

Problems Encountered. The previous quotations allude to some of the problems encountered by the district coordinators. Lack of support, from whatever stakeholder, creates obstacles for those charged with coordinating the Program at the local level. However, when asked specifically to identify problems, coordinators tended to think in terms other than stakeholder support. A new coordinator, who was not appointed until after the school year had begun, was faced with large numbers of participants and a late start to the Program. She felt that, due to circumstances, her district had not been able to offer mentors the training they deserved. While this was likely a reality, most participants were genuinely appreciative of her efforts and the extremely demanding conditions in which she was placed.

By contrast, the other new coordinator felt that she did not experience any serious problems. She had, however, learned an important lesson -- it is important to develop action plans in the initial sessions when both partners are present. Leaving plans to be completed later, when people found time, only created additional administrative headaches.

Insuring the selection of competent mentors continues to be an on-going problem for both coordinators and principals. Finding mentors is sometimes difficult. One coordinator who encountered poor matching of mentors to beginning teachers, suggested that principals' attitudes toward the selection process occasionally aggravate the process by "not taking their role seriously". Another coordinator who was also concerned about mentor selection had a slightly different perspective:

Some [mentors] were quite obviously less competent than others. It has a lot to do with a willingness to take the time required to answer all the questions, help with planning, advise re concerns, etc.

The remaining (experienced) coordinators mentioned a variety of problems they had to

deal with in the course of their responsibilities. One was getting partners to use the release days (most districts tried to provide approximately five days during the year) provided for class observations and discussion of teaching issues. The District 13 coordinator who experienced this problem, was also aware that shortage of time is a perennial problem:

> Although quite a few teachers expressed time as a problem on their surveys, they probably meant finding the time to meet with their mentor as the issue. Most of the pairs still had days they never used.

This finding is rather ironic, given that many principals, mentors and beginning teachers wanted more time for these very activities. Yet, previous surveys have reported similar problems. Some partners are reluctant to use their available days. Some report difficulty obtaining supply teachers or they find that the time involved in arranging and preparing for a supply teacher is not worth the effort.

Tracking BTIP funds within each district and insuring that all Department funds are spent by the March 31st deadline was another problem for virtually every coordinator, because they are responsible for two separate funds with two different deadlines. March 31st refers to the cut-off for spending funds provided by the Department of Education, whereas, NBTA funds arrive later, but can be spent until the end of the school year. Often, for lack of support staff, this tedious accounting job falls to the over-worked coordinators.

The coordinators mentioned another common problem – providing general support and supervision for the growing numbers of BTIP participants. One coordinator complained that the "time to make contact is insufficient due to the number of responsibilities". This complaint has been heard in previous surveys, but the situation in some district offices has been exacerbated by the growing numbers of participants and the reduced number of coordinators.

Finally, a coordinator asked what is to be done with long-term supply teachers. It appears that despite increased flexibility to include those who are hired for a full term, others cannot qualify because their terms of service fall slightly short of the stated criterion; funding cannot be extended to them. Currently, the only solution is to find additional funds within the district budget, as several districts have done.

Positive Features. District coordinators have always been strong supporters of the Program and the fact that every one of them recommended the continuation of the BTIP came as no surprise. Because they are so involved in the Program, they have an excellent macro view of both its negative and positive features.

One of the goals of any teacher induction program is to lower the rate of attrition among beginning teachers. Conversely, retaining a high percentage of new teachers in our system provides satisfaction to coordinators, as well as to the teachers themselves. Although data was collected in May, coordinators estimated that "almost all"of the beginning teachers would be re-hired. Job prospects for teachers in New Brunswick have improved dramatically in the last three years, and it is expected that this trend will continue at least for another six to eight years.

Despite encountering a variety of problems in administering the induction program in their districts, coordinators were eloquent and effusive when asked to identify positive features of their involvement in the BTIP.

The District 12 coordinator said that from his perspective, two positive features were seeing "growth for both beginning teachers and mentors" and "relationship building." His colleague in District 10 also focussed on the importance of relationships:

> It is heartwarming to see the wonderful relationships, personal and professional that developed between mentors and beginning teachers. As well, most of the mentors have found the experience to be rewarding, but a couple have found it to be professionally revitalizing; they look forward to the role in another school year.
>
> - Coordinator, District 10

The value of the BTIP for mentors was echoed by the coordinator in District 13, who appreciated "receiving positive feedback from veteran mentors that it was a quality experience for them". Colleagues in other districts agreed that "finding mentors who love to teach" was one of the rewards of their assignment.

Coordinators reserved the largest number of comments for the excitement they felt when working with teachers who are new to the profession -- "seeing the vitality and energy of new teachers and new ideas", as the District 13 coordinator described it. The coordinator in District 17 commented that he "enjoyed the enthusiasm of the beginning teachers and their willingness to explore and learn more about teaching and learning". In a similar vein, the coordinators in Districts 2 , 4, and 18 enjoyed " meeting the young energetic teachers", and "offering them help". Meanwhile, the only coordinator who had responsibility for three districts had this to say:

> New teachers are enthusiastic and want to be the best that they can be. When paired with the right mentor, their first year is a learning/growing period that is gratifying to be part of.
>
> - Coordinator, Districts 14, 15, & 16

Perhaps not every coordinator would agree with the exact words used by the coordinator in Districts 6 and 8 to describe her assignment as BTIP coordinator, but I think they would agree with the importance she attached to being a proactive leader in education.

> This is a dream portfolio! It is a proactive approach to teaching. Every year I recognize the uniqueness of the teaching profession and of every teacher.
>
> - Coordinator, Districts 6 & 8

Conclusions

In many respects this sixth annual report on teacher induction in New Brunswick resembles previous reports. A quick, overall glance at this report could lead one to the conclusion that it is a wonderful, continuing, success story. In many respects it is. More beginning teachers

than ever before were partnered with experienced mentor teachers; in the final analysis, almost all of them felt they benefited professionally from the Program, gave high praise to their mentors, and recommended the continuation of the BTIP. Mentors report feelings of personal motivation, satisfaction, professional growth, and new friendships; many were both pleased with their own development and proud that they had an opportunity to provide professional and emotional support for a new colleague. Principals clearly recognized its benefits for beginning teachers, experienced mentor teachers, and even themselves. While a significant proportion of principals are content to let someone else attend meetings and work directly with participants, approximately half can be considered actively involved with the Program. District coordinators who are ultimately the keys to the success of the BTIP, remain enthusiastic and supportive. Why then, the note of caution?

Several trends are disturbing and, in my opinion, unless they are properly addressed, will ultimately lead to the demise of the provincial induction program. These trends are:

- Fewer district coordinators are being asked to maintain or improve standards in a program which continues to expand in the number of teachers it accommodates.
- Overall funding for the BTIP continues to diminish as growth occurs.
- The retirement of the Provincial coordinator leaves a potential leadership vacuum which the Department of Education has not fully addressed.
- Although not statistically significant, there appears to be a continuing erosion of levels of satisfaction among BTIP participants.

More Expected of Fewer

It seems that change is the norm in public education today. Amalgamation, down-sizing, rationalization, and re-organization – code words for change – ultimately have an impact on the educators who work in our schools and district offices. In New Brunswick, district supervisors have been expected to change locations, supervise more teachers, handle more portfolios, and do them all well. The reality is that they cannot manage to meet all their commitments and still achieve the standards to which they aspire and which their clients deserve. Attempts to do so will ultimately result in reduced quality of services and a personal toll on emotional and physical well-being.

In several districts at least, the workload has increased to the point where district coordinators cannot give adequate time to the BTIP. They cannot meet with principals to inform them of the Program and get commitments for careful scrutiny of mentors; they cannot find the time to organize training workshops for mentors so that mentors will be trained and available when new teachers are hired; they cannot visit schools to encourage classroom observations and to find alternatives to unsuccessful partnerships; they do not have time to provide in-service support to the many new teachers who are currently hired after school starts and training workshops have been competed; they lack time and the budgets to hold mid-year workshops to

review BTIP agendas and re-generate enthusiasm for the second term. When so much is expected of so few, it is amazing that they accomplish as much as they do!

For the BTIP to survive and improve, superintendents and directors must provide their supervisors with the time and resources they desperately need to accomplish their goals. This may mean supporting district coordinators in their efforts to involve principals, hiring additional personnel to work directly on the BTIP, limiting the number of portfolios each supervisor handles, insuring that secretarial support is available to keep track of the two budgets, and organizing teams of supervisors to share BTIP responsibilities. If this Program is as good as participants say it is, then it needs to be seen as a high priority in every district and across the province. This is one investment which will pay dividends long into the future!

Diminishing Funding

The BTIP already runs on a shoestring budget. Through determination and personal credibility, the Provincial Coordinator has managed to convince the Department of Education to maintain annual funding levels at $500 per team, even as the Program grew from 125 teams to the current level of 300 partnerships. During the six years of the Program, the cost of supply teachers for release days has increased considerably. Today's money does not have the purchasing power it had in 1995. Furthermore, the fixed budget provided by the NBTA means less money for each team every year the program expands, and that has happened every year since 1996. Compared to induction programs in other parts of North America, ours runs on a veritable shoestring. Unless funding, from whatever source, is increased, then the BTIP is in danger of being penny-pinched out of significance and existence. Without the incentive of adequate release days, fewer and fewer mentors and beginning teachers will be willing to continue making personal sacrifices to participate in BTIP activities. If this occurs, no one benefits and everyone loses.

Leadership Critical

The Beginning Teacher Induction Program began as a cooperative effort by the NB Department of Education, the NB Teachers' Association, and the University of New Brunswick. However, behind the titles were two key individuals, Tom Hanley, the Assistant -Director of Professional Development and Innovation with the Department, and Dwain McLain, Director of Professional Development with the teachers' association. These two individuals convinced their organizations to support a teacher induction project in this province; they managed to secure funding, and they worked tirelessly to make the concept work. Dwain retired in 2000; Tom retired in August 2001. Dwain's replacement has been working with the Steering Committee since her appointment; Tom's position has not been filled. Instead, several consultants in the Department have been asked to assume responsibility for Tom's various portfolios – one of which is Provincial Coordinator for the BTIP and chair of the Steering Committee. Is this another example of more expected of fewer? A consultant has assumed Tom's mantle and will no doubt do his/her best. But at what personal cost? At what cost to the Program?

Strong leadership is required if the BTIP is to survive, let alone meet the challenges of its inevitable expansion. Much of the past success of the BTIP can be attributed to the hard work, determination, and leadership of Tom Hanley. He had the foresight to know that an induction program would be needed in this province at a time when teachers everywhere were looking for positions; he had a vision of how an induction program could transfer the knowledge of a generation of retiring teachers to a generation of new teachers; he understood how such a program could also provide professional development to veteran teachers who have limited opportunities for career advancement or recognition of their expertise. With help from his friends, he made these things happen. Without his strong leadership, the BTIP might never have gotten beyond the pilot stage. Strong leadership and vision will be required to meet the challenges of the future. Clearly that leadership must be provided by the Department of Education. It is critical that top officials in the Department recognize the importance of the BTIP to the future of Education in this province, and insure that Tom's replacement receives a manageable workload and adequate resources to complete this important assignment.

Erosion of Participant Satisfaction

A close examination of the professional development activities carried out by the partners at the school level reveals that previous activity patterns are continuing with no statistically significant changes. However, there are several signs of erosion of participant satisfaction. One example occurred in the Beginning Teachers' Survey, where there was a shift in the quality of responses to the statement, "I feel that overall the BTIP has been beneficial to me as a beginning teacher". Whereas in previous years, the majority "strongly agreed" with the statement, this year the majority only "agreed" with the statement, while the minority "strongly agreed". Mentors also recorded slightly declining satisfaction levels in their survey. These subtle changes imply that the BTIP is not meeting participants' needs to the extent that it did previously. If this is true, then now is the time to stop this erosion of satisfaction. It is not too late to reverse this erosion, but it will be difficult to achieve this if current trends continue – i.e. the number of participants continues to grow and both the number of coordinators and the amount of funding continue to decline.

The continuing erosion of participation frequencies in higher-risk activities such as classroom observations, feedback about teaching, and observation of beginning teachers by mentors, is also troubling. The significance of these activities for improving instruction is well established; beginning teachers continue to request increased opportunities to participate in these more meaningful activities; yet, in nearly half the partnerships, mentors do not observe their partners teach, or provide feedback based on classroom observations. Being satisfied with the status quo is like pretending not to know what we know about helping new teachers develop their skills beyond the survival stage. If teachers expect to develop professionally, then ways must be found to overcome the psychological barriers that keep so many classrooms closed and their teachers isolated from their colleagues. Realistically, the Steering Committee cannot expect higher participation rates in the higher-risk activities described in Table 5, unless workshop organizers at the district level are prepared to provide mentors with comprehensive training in observation and conferencing skills over an extended period. Current efforts will not accomplish this. Our choices are to maintain the status quo and be satisfied with slowly declining mediocrity, or, by increasing funding and trained personnel, to develop an outstanding program.

Other Issues

Three other issues of a less critical nature need to be discussed in this conclusion. The report showed evidence that organizing officials have exercised more scrutiny to insure that newly-hired teachers who are invited to join the BTIP, are, in fact, beginning teachers with relatively little teaching experience. While there are still obvious weaknesses with the selection process in some districts, overall, the new trend is encouraging; organizers still need to publicize the criteria for beginning teachers, so they become a part of our school culture.

The importance of mentor selection was raised by beginning teachers, mentors, principals and district coordinators. In particular, partners want to be matched with someone who teaches the same subject or grade. It is evident that if better matches were made, the level of satisfaction would improve for all participants. What is not clear is the extent to which selections are made by people who are familiar with the criteria. The criteria are sound and publically available, but are principals familiar with them? Do principals feel pressure to ignore some criteria because the demand for mentors is stronger than the supply? Is mentor training adequate? Can teachers with different teaching assignments be effective mentors without special training? I suggest that these questions be discussed by the Steering Committee and effective strategies identified.

A third issue concerns the declining level of involvement of principals in the induction program. The Principals' Survey showed that the number of principals who were not involved rose from 3 % to 10 %. Two district coordinators described principal support as inadequate; one said it was borderline. In previous reports, coordinators have expressed their desire to educate principals about the goals of the BTIP and to find ways to make them feel more like partners than outsiders. Obviously, these goals still represent a work in progress. Since both principals and coordinators want similar goals for beginning teachers, the solution appears to lie in providing more opportunities for dialogue between these two groups of busy educators. More discussion and sharing of success stories at the Steering Committee level may prove helpful, especially to newly-appointed coordinators.

Recommendations

1. In order to prevent further erosion of participant satisfaction, it is recommended that the Department of Education increase funding for the BTIP.

2. With the continuing growth of the BTIP and the amalgamation of school districts, some district coordinators have unmanageable work assignments. Superintendents and/or directors need to insure that enough personnel and resources are available to successfully coordinate the BTIP in each district. It is recommended that directors or superintendents consider appointing more than one person to share the position of district coordinator.

3. The Deputy-Minister of Education needs to insure that the individual who has been newly-appointed to lead the BTIP at the provincial level is provided with the time, resources, and support to successfully manage this important portfolio.

4. District coordinators and principals should carefully scrutinize which new teachers are invited to participate in the BTIP. Teachers with more than two years' previous teaching experience, even in another jurisdiction, should be excluded. Their professional development needs can be better met by other programs.

5. In order to avoid the all-too-common circumstance of teachers being asked to serve as mentors when a new teacher is hired after initial training has been completed, principals and coordinators should invite teachers to take mentor training before an assignment is available. Thus a trained 'mentor pool' will be available to draw on when needed.

6. In districts where there is interest and expertise, coordinators are encouraged to organize workshops specifically to train mentors and potential mentors in classroom observation and conferencing techniques. This could constitute a pilot project to determine if training in these skills will increase participation levels in the higher-risk activities described in Table 5.

7. In order to encourage more principals to assume increased responsibility for BTIP participants in their schools, it is recommended that district coordinators meet regularly with their principals to update them on the Program, to provide them with a copy of the Program Manual, and to make them more familiar with its contents.

8. Non-adherence to the advertised criteria for mentor selection continues to be a source of dis-satisfaction for both mentors and their partners. It is recommended that coordinators regularly review selection criteria with principals and determine the extent to which the supply of competent mentors can meet the demand.

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